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PATENT  
930007-2179

**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE  
BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES**

Applicant(s) : Erik Romanski et al.  
 U.S. Serial No. : 09/923,936  
 Filed : August 7, 2001  
 For : **FLOTATION COATING FOR WATER TRANSPORT  
BAGS**  
 Examiner : Andrew D. Wright  
 Group Art Unit : 3617  
 Confirmation No. : 5169

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**APPEAL BRIEF OF APPELLANT**

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Sir:

This is an Appeal from the Final Rejection by the Examiner dated May 28, 2004, which issued in the above-identified application, finally rejecting claims 1-3. A Notice of Appeal was filed on September 28, 2004. This Brief is submitted in triplicate as required by 37 C.F.R.

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§1.192(a) and is accompanied by the requisite fee set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.17(c) and the requisite fee for a one-month extension of time fee under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17(a). The Assistant Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fee, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 50-0320.

**REAL PARTY IN INTEREST**

The real party in interest is Albany International Corp., 1373 Broadway, Albany, NY 12204, to which Appellant has assigned all interest in this application.

**RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES**

Upon information and belief, the undersigned attorney does not believe that there is any appeal or interference that will directly affect, be directly affected by or have a bearing on the Board's decision in the pending appeal.

**STATUS OF THE CLAIMS**

The Application was filed with claims 1-11 on August 7, 2001, and assigned Application Serial No. 09/923,936. This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Serial No. 09/907,877 filed July 18, 2001, which in turn is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Serial No. 09/832,739 filed April 11, 2001.

In a preliminary amendment dated March 20, 2002 Appellant filed a preliminary amendment adding new claims 12 and 13.

In an official communication dated September 23, 2003, the Examiner issued a restriction requirement, requesting Appellant to select an embodiment for further prosecution on the merits.

In response to the restriction requirement, Appellants amended the claims to depend from a generic claim 1. In addition, Appellants provisionally elected 1-4 for further prosecution on the merits.

The Examiner issued an Office Action on December 1, 2003. In the Office Action, the Examiner issued an Examiner's amendment to claim 1, and because there was allegedly no allowable generic claim, forced the withdrawal of claims 5-13 from further consideration on the merits. The Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, and 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, on indefiniteness and insufficient antecedent basis grounds. The Examiner rejected claims 1 and 2 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly anticipated by U.S. 3,779,196 to Knaus et al. The Examiner also rejected claims 3 and 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Knaus et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 2,391,926 to Scott.

In response to the Office Action Appellants submitted a response on February 27, 2004, in which claims 1-5, 8, and 11 were amended to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112. Appellants traversed the Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103.

The Examiner then issued a Final Office Action on May 28, 2004. The Examiner rejected claims 1-3 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 2,997,973 to Hawthorne et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,897,303 to McCullough, Jr. et al.

A response to the Final Office Action was filed by Appellants on August 27, 2004 traversing the Examiner's rejection of claims 1-3.

A Notice of Appeal was filed by Appellant on September 28, 2004, from which this Appeal Brief is being filed.

The Examiner issued an Advisory Action on October 18, 2004, maintaining the rejections recited in the Final Office Action.

An interview was conducted with the Examiner on December 14, 2004, however no agreement was reached regarding the rejected claims.

The Examiner issued an interview summary on December 17, 2004, again maintaining the rejections of the Final Office Action.

Accordingly, the status of the claims may be summarized as follows:

Claims Allowed:	None.
Claims Objected to:	4.
Claims Rejected:	1-3
Claims Withdrawn	5-13.

#### **STATUS OF THE AMENDMENTS**

Appellant believes that all the submitted Amendments have been entered.

#### **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention is directed to water transport bags having a flotation coating. More specifically, the present invention is directed to large water transport bags having a length of 300 feet or more and a diameter in excess of 40 feet. In practice, these large transport bags are used to transport water or other fluidizable materials having a density less than seawater. One particular advantageous use is the economical transport of fresh water to locations that are in need.

The transport bag is designed to be foldable allowing for the bag to be rolled up after emptying for transport back to the source of fresh water or for storage until the next needed use. While other transport bags are known in the art, the known bags are not by themselves buoyant and rely on the fluidizable material to provide sufficient buoyancy for transport of the bag. Thus, when empty these known bags will sink. The present invention utilizes a thermoplastic or

thermoset coating to render the bag buoyant while still providing sufficient pliability to allow the bag to be rolled up, thus overcoming the shortcomings of the known transport bags.

### **ISSUES PRESENTED**

Whether claims 1-3 are unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. §103 over U.S. Patent No. 2,997,973 to Hawthorne et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,897,303 to McCullough, Jr. et al..

### **GROUPING OF CLAIMS**

For purposes of this appeal, claims 1-3 constitute one group and stand or fall together.

### **ARGUMENTS**

Claims 1-3 were improperly rejected as being unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). The instant invention is directed to a flexible fluid containment vessel for the transportation and/or containment of cargo comprising a fluid or fluidisable material, said vessel comprising, *inter alia*, a means for rendering the tubular structure buoyant comprising forming the fabric having at least one thermoplastic or thermoset coating that renders the fabric buoyant. Such an invention is neither disclosed, taught, enabled nor suggested in the cited documents. Further, the Hawthorne patent teaches away from such an invention.

Contrary to the assertion of the Examiner, neither Hawthorne nor McCullough, either alone or in combination, teach, suggest, disclose or motivate a skilled artisan to practice the instantly claimed invention. More specifically, the combination of the cited documents do not teach, suggest or motivate a skilled artisan to practice the claimed flexible fluid containment

vessel for the transportation and/or containment of cargo comprising a fluid or fluidisable material, said vessel comprising, *inter alia*, a means for rendering the tubular structure buoyant comprising forming the fabric having at least one thermoplastic or thermoset coating that renders the fabric buoyant.

The Examiner concludes that Hawthorne provides motivation to enhance the buoyancy of the fabric so that it could be used with fluidisable cargo that does not provide sufficient buoyancy on its own. However the Examiner acknowledges that Hawthorne does not disclose a thermoset or thermoplastic coating that renders the fabric buoyant. In contrast, Hawthorne teaches that buoyancy of the vessel is created by the contents of the vessel. (Col. 1, lines 30-32). As the buoyancy in the apparatus described in Hawthorne is already provided for, one of ordinary skill in the art would not look to McCullough to provide additional buoyancy. Specifically, Hawthorne already teaches the use the vessel's contents to provide the necessary buoyancy. In fact, in contrast to the view of the Examiner, the disclosure of Hawthorne would steer a skilled artisan away from having at least one thermoplastic or thermoset coating that renders the fabric buoyant. Thus, there would be no motivation for one skilled in the art to use the disclosure of Hawthorne and combine such teachings to incorporate at least one thermoplastic or thermoset coating that renders the fabric buoyant. Consequently the disclosure of Hawthorne would not motivate a skilled artisan to practice the instantly claimed invention.

The Examiner is respectfully reminded that the requisite expectation of success under settled U.S. case law cannot be found in Applicants' specification and that an obviousness rejection based on hindsight is impermissible.

It is well-settled that "obvious to try" is not the standard upon which an obviousness rejection should be based. *See In re Fine*, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596, 1599-1600 (Fed. Cir. 1988). And

as “obvious to try” would be the only standard that would lend the Section 103 rejection any viability, the rejection must fail as a matter of law. Therefore, applying the law to the instant facts, the rejection is fatally defective and should be removed.

Accordingly, for at least the reasons described above, the documents cited by the Examiner fail to render claims 1-3 unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). Therefore, the rejected claims should be allowed.


**CONCLUSION**

For the reasons discussed above, claims 1-3 are patentable. It is, therefore, respectfully submitted that the Examiner erred in rejecting claims 1-3, and a reversal by the Board is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPENDIX

CLAIMS ON APPEAL

1. (Amended) A flexible fluid containment vessel for the transportation and/or containment of cargo comprising a fluid or fluidisable material, said vessel comprising:  
  
an elongated flexible tubular structure comprised of fabric having a first side and a second side;  
  
said tubular structure being impervious and having a front end and a rear end;  
  
means for sealing said front end and said rear end;  
  
means for filling and emptying said vessel of cargo; and  
  
means for rendering said tubular structure buoyant comprising forming said fabric having at least one thermoplastic or thermoset coating that renders the fabric buoyant.
  
2. (Amended) The vessel in accordance with claim 1 wherein said fabric is woven and said first and second sides are formed by stitching points.
  
3. (Amended) The vessel in accordance with claim 1 wherein said fabric is formed out of yarns, and said at least one thermoplastic coating is subject to heat, pressure or both to cause it to flow and fill voids in said fabric.
  
4. (Amended) The vessel in accordance with claim 1 wherein a first thermoplastic coating is on said first side of the fabric and said second thermoplastic coating is on a second side of the fabric with said first thermoplastic coating being different from said second thermoplastic coating with said coatings being taken from the group consisting essentially of



urethane, polyester, polyamide, polyvinyl chloride, polyolefin or other suitable thermoplastic material.